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ABUJA FOR DARFUR PEACE TALKS DELEGATION

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SUBJECT: CHAD-BASED SLM LEADERS URGED TO SUPPORT PEACE PROCESS

REF: N'DJAMENA 618 FITZGIBBON/WALL TELCON AND EMAIL

5/4/2006

¶1. (SBU) In a meeting May 5 with Chad-based SLM leaders Dr. Sharif Hariri and Adam Shogar, the Ambassador urged them to help keep the peace process on track -- and at a minimum, not undermine it. Shogar and Hariri responded that they had been sidelined by the African Union, but were not obstructing the process. They returned to the objections raised in reftel, stressing, in particular, that the Senior Special Assistant to the President (SSA) needed to be established in the Constitution. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador Wall met with SLM leader Dr. Sharif Hariri and spokesman Adam Shogar May 5 to discuss the ongoing efforts in Abuja to bring peace to Darfur. Pol/Econ and DCM (notetaker) attended. The Ambassador stated that the United States was very serious about concluding a peace agreement and determined to see it happen. To this end, we had sent very high level U.S. Government representatives to Abuja. The Ambassador urged Hariri and Shogar to help keep the peace process on track, and at the very least, not undermine it. He noted that the United States had worked to make the SSA a serious, responsible position; that after three years Darfurians would be able to vote in a referendum on making Darfur a region. Most importantly, the Peace Agreement would open up a political arena for Darfur leaders to have a political role in Darfur.

¶3. (SBU) Dr. Hariri said that his people had been sidelined for too long in Abuja. For the agreement to be a success, they needed to be part of the process. However, they did not seek to undermine the process. That was why, in fact, they were keeping their distance. He explained that dissent was important -- it helped illuminate the pitfalls and problems. He stressed again that they did not seek to undermine the process. However, Abuja excluded a large number of Darfurians in the field. If they were not part of the process, they would ignore the results. He expressed deep appreciation for U.S. efforts, but noted that there were certain essential conditions that needed to be met. First of all, the SSA, to have authority, must be recognized in the constitution. "To have power in Sudan, it has to be anchored in the constitution" he stressed.

¶4. (SBU) Concerning integration of forces, Dr. Hariri stated that this would require them to abandon the only means they had to resolve the situation. The Movement's armies in the field were bigger than people realized -- bigger in fact than the national army. They would need a standing army for at least three to four years. He noted that compensation was a major issue as well: if it took USD 2 billion, then it should be paid. When Ambassador Wall mentioned that there was a donor's conference tentatively scheduled, Hariri was

dismissive. The problem with Africa, he stated, was that donors paid for everything, and African leaders got to do what they wanted.

¶ 15. (SBU) Spokesman Shogar brought up the question of janjaweed disarmament. He noted that although the Government of Sudan was already committed to disarming them, they had not done so. Furthermore, the proposed Peace Agreement referred to 8,000 Government of Sudan soldiers, but these weren't soldiers, he explained, they were just militia or public defense forces. The Movements could never join their soldiers to these forces. He called the proposed referendum on Darfur a "trick." The regions had been created by decree -- why was there a need now to have a referendum?

¶ 16. (SBU) Ambassador Wall concluded by asking Shogar and Hariri to recognize how hard the United States was working to achieve a just peace in Darfur and to carefully consider the points he had raised. He highlighted the sustained commitment from the United States to achieving progress in Abuja. He expressed hope that the SLM would find ways to support that process and engage positively. Find ways to get to Abuja, he urged, and help us reach a good agreement.

¶ 17. (SBU) Dr. Hariri responded that they could not go to Abuja, because the African Union (AU) had set preconditions. Salim Salim had said that he needed "guarantees". Shogar added that they had asked the AU to let them come to the talks with a mandate, but the AU had never recognized them. As a result, "weak leadership by the AU has led us to the current situation." Dr. Hariri reiterated that they were not obstructing the talks, nor were they advocating cutting off the process. They expected the deadline to be extended, and they would keep talking.

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COMMENT

¶ 18. (SBU) The SLM representatives welcomed this exchange, though they were hardly responsive to our message. They did not hide their dissatisfaction with the AU, but recognized the important role the U.S. has played and continues to play in the Darfur peace process. End Comment.

WALL